DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 278 093 EA 019 074

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TITLE The Local Perspective: Coping with an Instructional Management Program. Implementing Instructional Management in Jackson Municipal Separate School District.
PUB DATE Nov 86
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Memphis, TN, November 19-21, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Computer Uses in Education; Curriculum Design; Curriculum Development; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Development; *Instructional Effectiveness; *Integrated Curriculum; Objective Tests; Performance Tests; Program Development; Program Implementation; School Districts; Skill Development; Student Evaluation; Teaching Methods; *Unified Studies Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS *Mississippi (Jackson County)

ABSTRACT

This report describes four components of an instructional management program that was implemented by a large public school system in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1981. The four program components are the following: (1) A districtwide uniform curriculum; a districtwide standardized criterion referenced testing program; a performance-based student evaluation system; and a computerized instructional management system. Points made about each include the following: (1) The districtwide uniform curriculum comprises "a common body of knowledge"--a group of skills in subject areas at each grade level to be mastered. The curriculum was formulated by teacher committees and committees of district representatives, and is unit and objective based. (2) The districtwide standardized criterion referenced program is progressing toward a process of random generation of unit tests. (3) The performance-based student evaluation system requires determination of mastery of objectives and an overall unit test score. Students are retaught and retested on unit objectives not mastered. (4) The computerized instructional management system generates reports for teachers, principals, and district administrators for instructional planning and decision making and for program, curricular, and test item evaluation. The changes from reorganization of the district's instructional program have resulted in increased student achievement. (CJH)

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THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE: COPING WITH AN INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT IN JACKSON MUNICIPAL SEPARATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Jerrelyn Dennis
Jackson Municipal Separate School District

Part of a Symposium

IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT:

VIEWPOINTS FROM THREE PERSPECTIVES

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Mid-South Educational Research Association
Memphis, TN, November, 1986

EA 019 074

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IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT
IN
JACKSON MUNICIPAL SEPARATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Jackson Municipal Separate School District (JMSSD) is the public school system in Jackson, Mississippi. JMSSD has an enrollment of 32,500 which is approximately seventy-five percent minority. The district employs 1670 teachers in grades K-12. There are fifty-five schools in the district--thirty-six elementary schools, nine junior high schools, seven senior high schools, an Elementary Alternative School and a Secondary Alternative School which are open education schools, and a Career Development Center for vocational education. The district also has an Academic and Performing Arts Complex for academically and artistically gifted students.

Approximately five years ago the JMSSD Superintendent, Dr. Robert N. Fortenberry, led the district into involvement in the Effective Schools Movement. The district is heavily involved in this movement and is committed to the goal of every school being an effective school and to the belief that all children can learn. In Jackson we believe that to be effective a school must have a well-defined, uniform curriculum; identify minimum levels of student mastery; establish a feedback system based on student achievement; connect the grading and reporting system to the curriculum; use student mastery of essential skills as the basis for promotion; and develop a system for managing information in order to monitor student progress and to measure school achievement as well as student achievement. These beliefs guided us in planning, developing, and implementing our instructional management program. The JMSSD instructional management program has four components which will be discussed: a

district-wide uniform curriculum, a district-wide standardized criterion referenced testing program, a performance-based student evaluation system, and a computerized instructional management system.

In 1981 teachers in Jackson wrote the first edition of the district's uniform curriculum, which is called the Common Body of Knowledge, or CBOK. The philosophical basis for CBOK is that there is a common body of knowledge, an identifiable group of skills, for every subject area at each grade level which should be mastered by all students at that grade level in that subject area. The district believed that its best resource for identifying those skills and for writing the curriculum was the teachers within the district and was strongly committed to the involvement of teachers in the process of developing a curriculum. Each school in the district was asked to organize within the school a committee of teachers for each subject area/grade level in the school. These committees listed the skills which should be taught in each subject at each grade level. District committees of representatives from each school were then organized for each subject area/grade level. The district committees used the lists of skills submitted from each school to develop the district's curriculum. CBOK has been revised twice. The process for revision also allows for input from all teachers in the district and also utilizes district committees to write the revisions.

CBOK is a unit based as well as an objective based curriculum. CBOK is objective based in that mastery of each objective is expected. It is unit based in that the objectives are organized into topical units. Each subject area and grade level of CBOK contains objectives which are identified as Essential objectives--objectives which a

student must master in order to be successful at the next grade level of that subject area. Each unit of CBOK contains evaluative objectives which are tested for mastery and process objectives which are suggested methods for teaching the skills in that unit. CBOK units are written and organized in the sequence in which they are to be taught, and a suggested time frame is given for each unit. CBOK is not an optional curriculum--it must be taught by every teacher in the district to every student in the district.

After the first edition of CBOK was completed, district committees of teachers began to write test items for each objective in CBOK. As CBOK was revised, the test items were also revised. The process for writing test items is the same as the process for writing the curriculum. The first standardized tests were preconstructed unit tests containing items for each evaluative objective in the unit. Two parallel forms of each unit test were constructed by the district committees. A master copy of each form of each unit test was distributed to each school. The responsibility for maintaining the security of the tests and for overseeing the testing process in the school is the principal's. The district is currently moving toward a process of random generation of unit tests. A test item bank for each objective is being written and these test item banks are being entered into the district's mainframe computer in order to allow for random generation of multiple forms of unit tests. Randomly generated unit tests are presently available in grades 3-12 in English, science, and social studies. Since the district does not yet have the capability of randomly generating the unit tests within each school, ten forms of each test are generated at the Central Office location and a master copy of six of those forms is distributed to each school.

In September, 1983, JMSSD implemented a student evaluation system based on performance. This evaluation system is directly tied to our uniform curriculum and our testing program. Our evaluation system gives equal weight to objectives and to units, and requires determination of mastery or non-mastery of every objective as well as determination of an overall unit test score. Mastery of an objective is demonstrated by correctly responding to 75% of the items on the unit test which correspond to that objective. The overall unit test score is determined by averaging the objective scores, or the percentages of correct items for the objectives, of all the objectives in the unit. If a student scores 75 or above on the unit test but does not master all the objectives in the unit, the student must be retaught and retested on each objective not mastered. Any student whose unit test score is less than 75 is required to retake (after reteaching has occurred) another form of that unit test. After administration of the unit retest, the higher of the two scores, up to 75, is recorded for that unit. If the student scores above 75 on the unit retest, a 75 is recorded for that unit. The term grade for a student is computed on a 70/30 percentage basis. Seventy percent of the term grade is the average of the unit test scores of all the unit tests administered during the term and thirty percent of the term grade is the average of the assignment grades earned during the term. At the elementary level promotion is based on mastery of all of the Essential objectives in reading and mathematics. At the secondary level course credit is awarded to students whose final grade is 70 or above.

The JMSSD performance-based evaluation system requires extensive record-keeping. In order to alleviate much of the paperwork and to provide an efficient instructional management system which provides the information needed to evaluate the instructional program and to make instructional decisions, JMSSD implemented a computerized instructional management system in September, 1984. A planning team composed of instructional and data processing personnel developed the plan for the JMSSD computerized Instructional Management System (IMS) based on the results of a survey which asked principals and teachers to indicate the priorities for the implementation of such a system. The computer program for our IMS was written by our Data Processing Department to accomodate the specifics of our curriculum and our evaluation policy. The cost and complexity of implementing an IMS which is totally computerized necessitated the implementation of our system in phases. Phase III of the system was implemented in September of this year. The functions presently performed by our IMS include grading of all tests, generating test results reports as tests are graded, generating cumulative test results reports for classes and for individual students, averaging and reporting term grades and yearly averages, generating end-of-term school and district summary reports, and generating report cards for elementary pupils.

Each JMSSD school is equipped with an IBM PC-XT or PC-AT microcomputer, a Dataproducts 8070 printer, and a NCS 3000 scanner--the equipment necessary for our IMS. Each school employs a person whose job title is terminal operator to operate the equipment and the system. Each school presently has a stand-alone system--a system which operates independently in each building without being connected to the mainframe computer.

The JMSSD IMS generates reports for teachers, principals, and district administrators. Sixteen reports are available for teachers. These reports are generated at the individual schools, therefore principals also have access to these reports. Seven of the reports age generated automatically; the other reports are available on request. Seven summary reports are available for principals and district administrators, and five other summary reports are available for district administrators. IMS reports are used by teachers, principals, and district administrators for instructional planning, instructional decision-making, program evaluation, curricular evaluation, and test item evaluation.

During the last five years, the Jackson Municipal Separate School District has completely reorganized its entire instructional program. Radical changes have been made in many areas. These changes have not been made without opposition, but the results of increased student achievement have justified the changes and have turned skeptics into believers.